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ABSTRACT

The single parent who has to assume the role and the responsibilities of both mother and father provides a different sex-role model for the child than that provided in the two-parent family. Research has indicated that single parents are more androgynous than parents in intact families. To investigate the sex roles of 332 college students (213 females; 119 males) who were raised in single parent (N=48) and intact nuclear families (N=284), the BEM Sex-Role Inventory, the Spence-Helmreich Personal Attributes Questionnaire, the Family Environment Scale--Short Form, and the Marital History Survey were administered. An analysis of the results showed that children reared in a single-parent environment did not differ substantially from those reared in a nuclear parent home on scales measuring androgyny. However, single-parent family environments did produce a significant change in the distribution of sex-role types, i.e., androgynous males appeared more frequently in single-parent families, while androgynous females appeared less frequently; undifferentiated males appeared less frequently and undifferentiated females appeared more frequently. Neither age nor maternal employment were found to be significant factors determining androgyny. (BL)

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Androgyny in the Single-Parent Family

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Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the
Midwestern Psychological Association

Chicago, 6 May 1983

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Abstract

The relationship of a single-parent family structure to androgyny was assessed using the BSRI, PAQ, and FES. Single-parent subjects had more idealized yet conflicted perceptions of their family environment regardless of level of androgyny. Androgyny did not differ between family types but four variables were predictive of androgyny.

Androgyny in the Single-Parent Family

The rapidly increasing rate of divorce in the United States (Reichbach, 1979) has led to a corresponding increase in the number of children who are being reared in single-parent families. In a vast majority of these families (90%), the single parent is the mother (Reichbach, 1979). Many questions have been raised concerning the possible effects this type of environment may have on the child's development. The present investigation intends to focus on one particular aspect of the child's development, the sex-role development of children who have been raised in single-parent families.

According to the social learning perspective of sex-role socialization, sex-roles are acquired via two processes: (a) the reinforcement of appropriate sex-role behaviors; and (b) the modeling of appropriate sex-role behaviors (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, & Zellman, 1978; Kirkpatrick, 1979; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Mischel, 1970). Children develop their sex-role behaviors through interaction with a wide range of adults and peers, with the parents playing a particularly important role (Hoffman, 1974; Kaplan & Bean, 1976; Mischel, 1970; Weitz, 1977). As Kaplan and Bean (1976) point out, parents are the earliest and most powerful models available to the child.

The single-parent, who has to assume the role and the responsibilities of both mother and father, provides a different sex-role model for the child than either the mother or father in a two-parent family. Research has indicated that single-parents are, in fact, more androgynous than parents in the intact family environment (Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Reichbach, 1979). Thus, social learning theory would predict that children who are raised in single-parent families should be more likely to develop an androgynous sex-role than their counterparts who grow up in intact nuclear families (Kaplan & Sedney, 1980; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980).

Research concerning maternal employment is also pertinent to sex-role development of children raised in single-parent families. After divorce, single mothers usually obtain employment outside of the home to ease the financial strain the family is experiencing (Reichbach, 1979). Many studies have shown that a relationship exists between maternal employment and androgynous behavior in their offspring (e.g. Siegel, Stolz, Hitchcock, & Adamson, 1963). Hoffman (1974) has found that maternal employment is associated with less traditional sex-role concepts in their daughters and that sons of employed mothers tend to have less stereotyped conceptions of the male role. Vogel, Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkrantz (1970) also obtained results which indicated that children of mothers who are employed full-time held less traditional sex-role stereotypes than did children whose mothers were not employed outside the home, or were employed part-time.

Thus, the greater likelihood of the single mother being employed outside of the home, and the less sex-role stereotyped behavior of the single-parent increases the likelihood that children raised in a single-parent family will be less stereotyped, or more androgynous, than children raised in an intact nuclear family. These differences, however, may not be apparent at an early age. Pleck (1975) has shown that sex-typed interests and traits reach their peak during adolescence, and that the individual may then move past traditional sex-roles during adulthood. Hyde and Rosenberg (1980) also hypothesize that the effect of the roles that parents model may make little difference during childhood, but by late adolescence or adulthood, individuals will tend to show the effects of exposure to less traditional models.

The present investigation used several common paper and pencil measures to assess the sex-roles of college students who were raised in single-parent or intact nuclear families. It was predicted that those respondents raised in

single-parent families would be more androgynous than those raised in two-parent families. It was also predicted that children of employed mothers would more likely develop an androgynous sex-role. An additional major goal of the investigation was to assess perceived differences in the family environment that might account for differences in androgyny.

Method

Participants. By a direct solicitation procedure in introductory psychology courses, 332 volunteers were obtained. All students received extra course credit for their participation in the study. In this sample, 213 were women and 119 were men. Persons reared in a single-parent family environment constituted 14% of the sample (n=48) while individuals reared in a traditional two-parent nuclear family constituted 86% of the sample (n=284). Representativeness of the sample is indicated by the fact that this percentage of single-parent family children is very close to the 16% reported national average.

Instruments. Three assessment devices provided information central to this study's purposes. The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974, 1981) was selected as one of two primary scales designed to assess sex-role differentiation. The BSRI regards masculinity and femininity as two independent dimensions thus permitting four possible classification outcomes: (1) androgynous, (2) masculine, (3) feminine, (4) undifferentiated.

The second scale selected was the Spence-Helmreich (1974, 1975) Personal Attributes Questionnaire. The PAQ provides three scales, a masculine trait scale, a feminine trait scale, and an M-F scale which contained items of an oppositional variety. That is, some items were desirable for women but undesirable for men, and vice versa.

The third device was Moos' (1974) Family Environment Scale-Short Form. This was designed to assess the social climate of the family. As Moos (1974, p. 3) states: "It focuses on the measurement and description of the interpersonal relationships among family members, on the directions of personal growth which are emphasized in the family, and on the basic organizational structure of the family."

An instrument specially constructed for this investigation, the Marital History Survey, tapped a number of variables judged to be theoretically important based on past research. These included factors producing the single-parent environment (e.g., death vs. divorce), duration of the single-parent family situation, perception of reasons for divorce (emotional conflict, loss of love, etc.), gender of primary care parent, and type of and degree of contact with substitutes for the missing parent.

Additional "filler" scales were included in the packet of materials supplied to each student. These scales included the Crown-Marlowe Social Desirability Scale (1964), the Rotter Locus of Control Scale (1966), Spence and Helmreich's (1978) Attitudes Toward Women Scale (ATW), and a modified version of Bem's Scale considering characteristics appropriate for boys and girls as opposed to those appropriate for men and women. The latter scale was used as part of an ongoing project which will not be reported here.

Procedure. Participants were tested in groups of 15 to 25. Upon reporting for their scheduled session, students received a packet of materials including informed consent, a demographic record, and the Marital History Survey. After completing this initial information survey, a second packet was distributed containing the BSRI, PAW, FES, and the other scales describe earlier. Packets were assembled in a counterbalanced order for the two major androgyny scales

and filler scales. The FES was always at the end of the packet, the reason to be explained below.

Immediate inspection of one item on the Marital History Survey determined the person's status on the primary independent variable, i.e., single-parent family environment present during some part of their developmental history versus a traditional nuclear parent family structure. Those individuals reporting a single-parent family environment were given a packet with two special additions. That is, two Moos Family Environmental Scales were attached with instructions that directed the person to first report perceptions of the nuclear parent family environment prior to the absence of one of the parents. After this, perceptions of the single-parent family environment were to be supplied on the second FES. The second addition to this packet for single-parent children was a form requesting permission to follow up for purposes of longitudinal research.

Results

Classification into one of the four sex-role types derived from the BSRI was based on the median split method proposed by Bem (1974). After comparing the size of our sample and the masculine medians and feminine medians to Bem's own sample and median values, we decided to use Bem's median values of 4.95 for the masculine score split, and 4.90 for the feminine score split.

Analyses of scores on the BSRI and the PAQ provided confirmation of the scale's discrimination between the sexes as expected. (See Table 1 below.) The values show clearly the higher feminine mean for females and the higher masculine mean for males. Univariate F tests ($df = 1,328$) were significant for all comparisons as shown in the table.

Table 1
Feminine and Masculine Scores on the BSRI by Total Group
and by Sex of Respondent (N = 330)

SCALE	MEASURE	TOTAL	FEMALES	MALES	F-RATIO	P
BSRI FEM	Mean	4.94	5.04	4.76	21.25	< .0001
	Median	4.95	5.09	4.75		
	St.Dev.	.55	.56	.49		
BSRI MASC	Mean	4.90	4.74	5.20	30.69	< .0001
	Median	4.95	4.70	5.20		
	St. Dev.	.75	.76	.64		
PAQ FEM	Mean	3.95	4.00	3.86	4.34	= .038
	St.Dev.	.60	.56	.64		
PAQ MAS	Mean	3.58	3.50	3.72	9.45	= .002
	St.Dev.	.66	.65	.65		
PAQ M-F	Mean	2.79	2.66	3.02	19.70	< .0001
	St.Dev.	.73	.69	.74		
ATW	Mean	51.91	53.10	49.80	15.67	< .001
	St.Dev.	7.44	7.11	7.59		
CMSDS	Mean	13.24	13.81	12.23	8.61	= .004
	St.Dev.	4.75	4.77	4.55		

On the Spence-Helmreich Attitudes Towards Women scale, the difference indicates that men have less positive attitudes toward women than do women. The differences on the Social Desirability Scale are in the direction of higher desirability responses for females, as was expected.

Comparisons between nuclear parent family respondents and those reared in a single-parent home revealed no significant differences on the primary measures of masculinity, femininity, or the Crown-Marlowe Social Desirability Scale. (See Table 2). There was, however, a significant difference on the Attitudes Towards Women scale. On this measure single-parent respondents had a more

positive attitude toward women than nuclear parent respondents.

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and F-ratios for the BSRI,
PAQ, ATW, & CMSDS by Family Type (N = 330)

SCALE	MEASURE	NUCLEAR PARENT	SINGLE-PARENT	F-RATIO	P
BSRI FEM	Mean	4.96	4.84	2.10	.15
	St.Dev.	.53	.62		
BSRI MASC	Mean	4.92	4.81	< 1.0	.37
	St.Dev.	.72	.92		
PAQ FEM	Mean	3.58	3.54	< 1.0	.70
	St.Dev.	.53	.90		
PAQ MAS	Mean	3.58	3.54	< 1.0	.70
	St.Dev.	.59	.97		
PAQ M-F	Mean	2.79	2.76	< 1.0	.76
	St.Dev.	.66	1.04		
ATW	Mean	51.49	54.37	6.29	.013
	St.Dev.	7.31	7.75		
CMSDS	Mean	13.23	13.85	< 1.0	.40
	St.Dev.	4.80	4.64		

Excluding the ATW result, these findings were the first suggestion that single-parent environments might not produce the results predicted by our primary hypothesis.

The distribution of sex-types by gender as derived from the BSRI is shown in Table 3 below. The primary hypothesis, that androgyny would occur more frequently in single-parent families than in the nuclear family was confirmed in part. That is the distribution of sex-role types does differ in the single-parent family as a function of gender.

Table 3
Percentage of BSRI Sex-role Types by Family Type
and Sex of Respondent (N = 310)

SEX	MALE		FEMALE	
	NPF	SPF	NPF	SPF
BSRI CATEGORY				
Androgynous	28.6 (30)	53.8 (7)	30.7 (54)	17.1 (6)
Masculine	36.2 (38)	30.8 (4)	13.1 (23)	17.1 (6)
Feminine	7.6 (8)	0.0 (0)	39.2 (69)	28.6 (10)
Undifferent	27.6 (29)	15.4 (2)	17.0 (30)	37.1 (13)

The differences can be seen most clearly by inspecting the male columns first and comparing between the nuclear and single-parent family. The percentage of androgynous males increases while the percentage of undifferentiated decreases. This difference is significant as evaluated by Kendall's Tau ($C = .115$) at the $p = .035$ level. Inspecting the female columns reveals that the percentage of undifferentiated females increases while the percentage of feminine females decreases. There is, further, a slight suggestion of an increase in the masculine typed female. Once again, the change from the nuclear parent family to the single-parent family is significant as evaluated by Kendall's Tau ($C = -.122$) at the $p = .018$ level.

Following the lead of other investigators, we reclassified the participants as follows: all masculine males and feminine females were grouped together and designated stereotyped, all feminine males and masculine females were grouped as role-reversed, the androgynous were retained as a group, and the undifferentiated were omitted for the purposes of the following analysis. The procedure eliminating the undifferentiated has been used more frequently in recent years as researchers have recognized the need to maximize the "signal" available in the

primary sex-type categories and to minimize the alleged "noise" produced by the undifferentiated group. Used cautiously, there is much to recommend the technique. However, the "undifferentiated" group should not be wholly forgotten in the quest to identify variables related to role differentiation in the other groups. Indeed, there should be no less interest in this group than in the others even though the difficulties involved in exploring their unique sex-role developmental patterns may be monumental. Comparing Table 4 (shown below) to Table 3, we see the same pattern as discussed previously, i.e., an increase in androgynous males and decrease in androgynous females, no substantial change in percentages of stereotyped individuals, a decrease in role-reversed males and an increase in role-reversed females. These changes only suggest a trend since the results were not significant for this reclassification scheme.

Table 4
Percentages of Stereotyped, Androgynous, and Role-Reversed Respondents Grouped by Family Type and Sex (N = 255)

Recoded BSRI Types	Nuclear Parent Family		Single-Parent Family	
Sex	Male	Female	Male	Female
Androgynous	39.5 (30)	37.0 (54)	63.6 (7)	27.3 (6)
Stereotyped	50.0 (38)	47.3 (69)	36.4 (4)	45.5 (10)
Role-Reversed	10.5 (8)	15.8 (23)	0.0 (0)	27.3 (6)

A regression analysis was used to identify other variables which might be related to androgyny as reflected in the three-fold classification scheme. Univariate F tests disclosed four additional variables which were significantly related to

the categories. These variables are high school grade point average, size of home town, birthorder, and number of sisters. Table 5 below reports the means and F-ratios for the three respective groups. The general outcome of this analysis can be summarized in this fashion: androgynous children tend to be

Table 5
Means and F-ratios for GPA, Hometown Size, Sisters and
Birthorder Grouped by Sex-role Types (N = 257)

Variable		Androgynous	Stereotyped	Role-reversed	F-ratio	P
HSGRADE	M	3.28	3.07	3.46	3.11	.046
	SD	.93	.82	1.17		
HMTNPOP	M	2.63	2.26	2.38	3.05	.049
	SD	1.14	1.11	1.01		
BIRTHORD	M	3.36	2.77	2.81	3.85	.022
	SD	1.81	1.47	1.56		
NUM SIST	M	1.90	1.38	1.40	4.14	.017
	SD	1.65	1.15	1.23		

born later than either their stereotyped or role-reversed age-mates; they tend to have more sisters in their family; they come from larger cities (populations closer to 10,000); and they tend to earn higher grades in high school than their peers.

One variable which we had expected to find influentially related to androgyny was whether or not the mother worked. Table 6 presents the results of our analysis of this variable. We grouped respondents on the basis of whether their mother was a housewife (or unemployed), or worked in gainful employment or was a student. Analysis of this distribution showed no significant differences between the nuclear family respondents and single-parent family respondents in relationship to the

BSRI categories. Analysis of the distribution by the re-classified roletypes (stereotyped, androgynous, and role-reversed) also revealed no significant differences.

Table 6
Percentage of BSRI Types Grouped by Family Type
and Employment of Mother (N = 328)

BSRI Category	Nuclear Parent Family		Single-Parent Family	
	Housewife or no work	Works or Student	Housewife or No Work	Works or Student
Androgynous	31.4 (38)	29.6 (47)	28.6 (4)	26.5 (9)
Masculine	24.8 (30)	19.5 (31)	14.3 (2)	23.5 (8)
Feminine	20.7 (25)	32.7 (52)	14.3 (2)	23.5 (8)
Undifferentiated	23.1 (28)	18.2 (29)	42.9 (6)	26.5 (9)

The second purpose of the study was to investigate perceived differences in the family environment. At the outset, we assumed that confirmation of the first hypothesis, i.e., more androgynous individuals would be found in single-parent homes, would benefit in an explanatory sense by being able to suggest what factors in the home environment contributed to that increase. Since the primary hypothesis was not confirmed, we altered our strategy in terms of what we might accomplish in the analysis of the home environment. Given the salience of divorce and its potential for deleterious influences on the child's development, we felt that we could not discard data collected on such a large sample. Perceptions of the family environment provided by children reared in a single-parent home might provide valuable insights into the psychosocial stressors experienced by such children.

Within the group of respondents whose home life had been disrupted, the primary cause of family split was virtually evenly divided between divorce ($n = 21$) or death of one of the parents ($n = 25$). Approximately two-thirds (31 of 46) of those homes disrupted for some period of time by either cause were never restored to the traditional two-parent family structure; conversely, only about one-third were restored through marriage to a nuclear family structure. In this group of 46, 41 people indicated that they had lived for some period of time in a single-parent family environment. The discrepancy is accounted for by the few individuals who quickly moved into foster care, went to live with grandparents, or other relatives. On average, the duration of living in a single-parent environment was 57.35 months, with a range of 1 to 156 months and a modal length of 18 months. Primary care in the single-parent home was provided by the mother in 30 cases and by the father in only 1 case.

The Moos Family Environment Scale was used as the dependent measure providing 10 scores descriptive of various structural features of the home environment. Each score was analyzed separately with respondents grouped by family type (nuclear or single) and by role-type (androgynous, stereotyped, or role-reversed). Space does not permit reporting all of the respective tables and graphs of the significant terms which emerged. We have, therefore, elected to provide one summary table (Table 7 below) of the 10 variables, and one summary graph (Figure 1, next page). While the graph is descriptive of the differences between the six main groups for which significance was determined, it obviously cannot do justice to the interactions which were revealed in each variable. Suffice it to say at this point that the pattern was consistent for each and every variable: that is, role-type was not significant in any of the analyses, family type was always significant, and the interaction between role-type and family type was always significant. In the table, then, the F-ratios reported

are just for the two significant terms.

Table 7
Means and F-ratios for the Moos Family
Environment Scale by Family Type

FES SCALE	NPF	SPF	Family Type Main Eff (df = 1,250)	Family x Role Type (df = 2,250)
Cohesion	3.22	10.45	F = 47.12; p < .001	F = 8.68; p < .001
Expressive	2.35	9.85	F = 45.39; p < .001	F = 7.64; p = .001
Conflict	1.90	10.64	F = 63.70; p < .001	F = 7.30; p = .001
Independ	3.39	10.70	F = 47.02; p < .001	F = 8.04; p < .001
Ach-Orient	2.60	10.55	F = 53.96; p < .001	F = 8.38; p < .001
Intell-Cul	2.72	10.00	F = 43.93; p < .001	F = 9.72; p < .001
Active-Rec	3.11	10.55	F = 48.23; p < .001	F = 8.71; p < .001
Moral-Reli	3.28	10.97	F = 53.47; p < .001	F = 8.81; p < .001
Organizati	2.91	10.67	F = 51.96; p < .001	F = 7.64; p = .001
Control	1.98	10.85	F = 68.34; p < .001	F = 7.54; p = .001

Before inspecting the graph of the means, a word about the respective scales derived from the FES is in order. The COHESION scale is the extent to which family members are concerned about and committed to the family. In addition, the degree to which family members are helpful and supportive of each other is reflected in the measure. EXPRESSIVENESS is the extent to which family members are allowed to express their feelings openly, and the extent to which they are encouraged to act openly. CONFLICT is the extent to which open expression of anger and aggression and generally conflictual interactions are characteristic

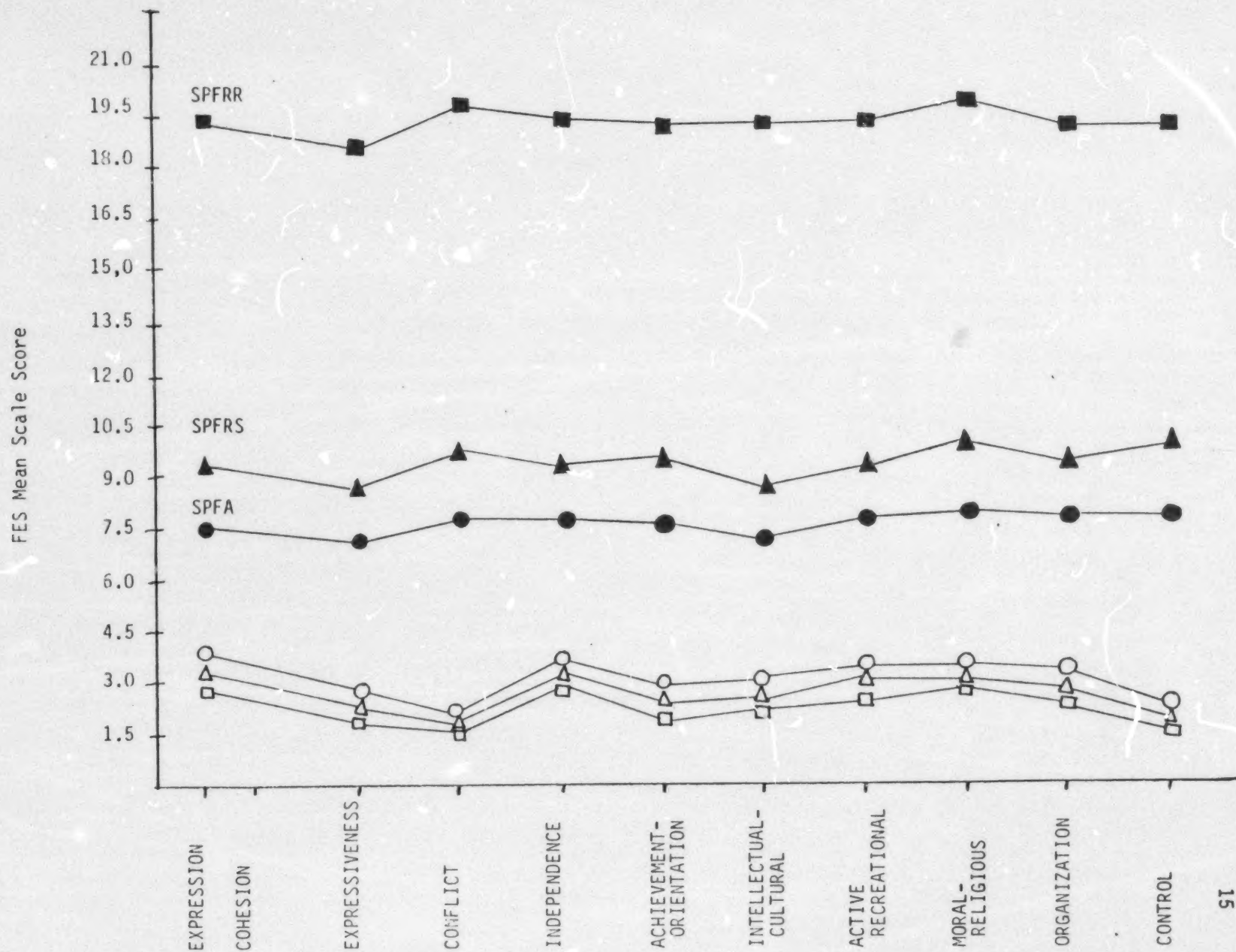


Figure 1. Perceptions of family environment (FES) in single-parent and nuclear parent family subjects grouped by Androgyny (BSRI).

of the family. These three scales are viewed by Moos as tapping relationship dimensions.

INDEPENDENCE is the extent to which family members are encouraged to be assertive and self-sufficient, to make their own decisions and to think things out for themselves. When different types of activities, e.g., school and work tasks, are cast into an achievement orientation or competitive framework, it is called ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION. The INTELLECTUAL-CULTURAL ORIENTATION reflects the extent to which the family is concerned about political, social, intellectual and cultural activities. The degree of recreational and sporting activities is reflected in the ACTIVE-RECREATIONAL ORIENTATION SCALE. Emphasis on ethical and religious issues and values is scaled in the MORAL-RELIGIOUS EMPHASIS section. These five scales are grouped by Moos into a personal growth dimension.

The last two scales make up the system maintenance dimension. The ORGANIZATION scale measures how important order and organization is in the family for such things as family activities, financial planning, rules and responsibilities. Finally, CONTROL assesses the extent to which the family is hierarchical, has rigid rules and procedures, and the extent to which family members order each other around.

Inspection of the graph of means for each scale reveals a consistent pattern to the responses of the six groups. The nuclear parent children respond in a fashion which suggests that their perceptions are consistent with those which exist in the population at large. This is based on congruence with the means from Moos' own sample of 285 families. Responses of this group do not vary greatly regardless of sex-role type. There is a very slight tendency for androgynous individuals to have slightly higher means than either the sex-role stereotyped or the sex-role reversed respondents.

The pattern for the single-parent children is much different however.

Here, on every measure, androgynous persons are closest to those reared in the nuclear family. These responses are nonetheless substantially elevated relative to the normal population. Both the stereotyped and role-reversed types have even more exaggerated scores on all scales. In these two groups, it is the role-reversed people who show the most extreme scores. The picture is one of a highly "idealized" home environment on those scales which might be regarded as positive or reflect desirable features of any home environment, and "conflicted" for those scales where negative or less desirable features of a home environment are presumably assessed. The reasons for this and other findings reported here are explored in the discussion below.

In summary, the results reported here suggest that children reared in single-parent environments do not differ substantially on scales measuring androgyny from those reared in a nuclear parent home. While androgynous persons did not appear more frequently in the single-parent home as had been predicted, there were significant differences in the distribution of sex-role types between the nuclear and single-parent family homes. Androgynous males appear more frequently while androgynous females appear less frequently. Undifferentiated males appear less frequently while undifferentiated females appear more frequently. "Masculinized females" may appear more frequently, but this result was not significant by statistical analysis and thus should not be regarded as anything more than a trend which requires further substantiation. It appears, then, that the single-parent family environment affects the sex-role development of males differently than it does that of females.

Discussion

The single-parent family environment produces changes in the sex-role differentiation process from that encountered in the nuclear family environment. These changes are also clearly gender related in that the changes produced in female children are of a different nature than those produced in male children. We, perhaps too naively, assumed that the changes in the single-parent children would be to increase androgyny overall, i.e., both in males and females. This would be consistent though with the findings of Kurdek and Sieskey (1980). Other research does point to differential effects in personality and cognitive functions for the sexes (Heatherington, 19). The discrepancy between our prediction and our results is largely due to the differential gender effect. The outcome showed no overall increase in percentage of androgyny cases encountered but for a particular reason: the increases in androgyny for the male population were offset to a large extent by the decrease in androgyny among females. Some hypotheses are offered to account for the processes extant in the single-parent environment producing the shift.

Since the single-parent family is headed by a woman in over 90% of the cases, it would seem necessary to investigate what might be transpiring in the differential role-relationships, i.e., mother to son and mother to daughter. The son's increase in androgyny might be accounted for through a variety of processes. First, the role-model provided by the mother would not substitute perfectly for that provided by a father. But through the necessary instrumental-assertive demands on the mother to manage the house, family, and employment, she would demonstrate to the son the compatibility of that role with the sensitive-expressive. An assimilation by the son of the compatibility of these two modes of conduct could in fact account for the increase in androgyny among the males. Such an

explanation would be consistent with both social-learning analysis and cognitive scheme theories (Bem, 1980) of sex-role development. Use of two theories in this case is not necessarily weak or unparsimonious. It is assumed that the role-model provided by the parent is a part of the environmental information assimilated by the child which in turn produces a necessary accommodation of existing schemas referencing sex-role permissible conduct, feelings, and traits. The latter could be expected to interface with self-image and suggest that a broader range of traits is permissible in women than originally considered. By analogy, the son's schema might be elaborated to also consider a broader range of traits, feelings, and behaviors as permissible for himself.

While such explanations may be satisfying, they are speculative in nature and can only suggest what might be useful formulations to guide future research. It would also seem that additional factors must be taken into account to understand the dynamics of sex-role development in the single-parent family. One such factor is the emotional reaction/adjustment patterns of the child after the loss of the parent. The son's emotional reaction to departure of the father through divorce or death would be expected to increase empathetic identification with the mother. This should also have the effect of increasing the tendency toward androgynous behavior. Here, it is assumed that emotionality functions as an internal dynamic to increase the salience of some cues for integration into the cognitive scheme and possibly distort or interfere in the assimilation of other cues.

Further, absence of the masculine role-model could be expected to exert an effect by reducing the frequency and possibly salience of cues associated with the traditional masculine model. This may also be coupled with the tendency for single-parent families to be made up of a disproportionate number of females, thus further pressuring the male in the direction of some assimilation of the

instrumental with the expressive, the assertive with the sensitive. The last suggestion is partially corroborated by the results of this research which shows that androgyny increases with the number of sisters in the family.

The integration of variables into a theoretical framework to explain the process of sex-role development in the single-parent male must also have some generality to the single-parent female. The demonstration of instrumental-assertive and sensitive-expressive conduct in the mother could possibly produce confusion in signals for the girl that is not produced for the boy. That is, the male child's primary role model was presumably the father while the female child's primary role-model was and still is the mother. Assuming that the mother's behavior has had to undergo some sudden shifts for her own survival in the new world of single-parenting, it is then quite reasonable to assume that the cognitive accomodation required of the girl is of a different order than that of the boy. If this line of reasoning is correct, the prediction would be that more female children should develop in an undifferentiated fashion. The emotional factors involved in adjustment to loss of the father would also not be of the same nature as that encountered by the son. This is not to say that the girl's emotional reactions would be any less intense or sincere. Assuming that some cross-sex identification takes place in both genders, the absence in the girl's case of the cross-sex model could produce emotional enhancement of cues related to the male sex-role and thus an increase in the likelihood of masculine females. The latter explanation is offered in full recognition that the increase in masculine females is offered in full recognition that the increase in masculine females observed in our sample was not statistically significant. Speculation as to cause may thus be premature until further research demonstrates whether the trend is reliable or not.

For the purpose of this discussion we have elected to focus primarily on

the woman headed family and the dynamics which might be operative in that environment. This is predicated, of course, on the observation of the high relative proportion of such households to those headed by male single-parents. Should the model proffered above be substantiated by future research, it would require extending to the male single-parent household. Research of this nature would require a sample of such households in sufficient numbers to make adequate statistical evaluations of differences, or lack thereof, between the male and female headed single-parent families. Our results turned up only one male headed single-parent household, and thus offered no opportunity for us to decipher any trends in differential distributions of sex-types from those demonstrated in the female headed single-parent family.

The absence of a maternal employment effect is an enigma for which we have no ready explanation. The research cited at the outset (e.g., Siegel, Stolz, Hitchcock, & Adamson, 1963) clearly indicates that maternal employment should increase the likelihood of androgyny in offspring, and should reduce the tendency for the single-parent female to be more frequently employed than the married woman is true in our sample. This should, all other things being equal, increase the likelihood of observing androgyny among the children of the single-parent. As already noted, such an effect did not emerge nor was it observed in the population of nuclear-parent children. One explanation may be that the rather conservative nature of region from which the sample was drawn mitigates against the influence of maternal employment observed in other samples. Another possible explanation comes from looking at the overall proportion of working wives and mothers. In spite of the conservative nature of the region, 57% of the wives in nuclear families work. In other words, the necessity for the woman to work

may be established as a norm for the region, so that departures from it in the single-parent family are of such a slight nature as to have little influence with regard to sex-role development.

The age factor demonstrated by other researchers to be of importance in the development of androgyny was not significant in our sample. However, it is interesting to note that means for the respective groups are in the expected direction, and a substantially larger variance in the androgynous group (i.e., more of the older subjects are included in this group) may account for the failure to show significance. We suspect that a reanalysis omitting the few older-than-average subjects might reduce this variability while not substantially reducing the mean.

Conclusions in regard to the size of home town must be interpreted in the context of the region. The average size of town reported by the more androgynous people was 10,000 while the average size of town reported by the stereotyped and role-reversed was closer to 1,000. It may not be the absolute size of town which is of importance, but relative contrast within a region. The availability of a wider range of peer models and life-styles to observe which a larger city provides may be most significant.

Assessment of the family environment as carried out in this investigation leads to the conclusion that the child reared for some time in a single-parent environment has a radically different perception of the nuclear family than those reared continuously in the traditional nuclear family. These perceptions suggest a great deal of "conflictual" content in that an exaggerated sense of rigidity, competition, control, and actual conflict emerges. On the other side is an almost fantasy like picture of cohesiveness, independence, and opportunity to express oneself. It may be that these elements have been "idealized" by the individual much as one might exaggerate positive elements of a lost love even

granted the presence of many negative characteristics in the person. We would suggest that there are fundamental emotional and motivational variables operating through a cognitive schema which we will loosely refer to as the "home" schema. The "home" schema will include in it a variety of cognitions of what a "real" and what a "good" home environment should be like. This would include a number of very salient features including personal relationships, physical surroundings (return to home of your own youth), yearning for restoration of the broken home (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), and probably recollections of many interactions of an anxiety arousing variety. This cognitive schema would contain many elements of what is usually called a double approach-avoidance conflict. Information from cognitive dissonance research could be used to further suggest that such a conflict in "information" about the original home environment would produce tension and cognitive pressure to reconcile. Assuming that the all too real negative elements cannot be repressed, a compensatory mechanism may be initiated by idealizing the positive elements.

One factor which we have not as yet been able to pursue is the difference between individuals in the single-parent family based upon the cause for the disrupted home. A substantial number of the single-homes resulted from death of a parent. This must constitute a much different situation from that confronted when loss of the parent is due to a conflicted marital relationship. We hope to add to the sample of single-parent subjects and return to a full analysis of this factor with later research.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated that the single-parent family produces a significant change in the distribution of sex-role types as measured by the BSRI. This shift is in the direction of more androgynous males and more undifferentiated females. A cognitive schema theory in conjunction with a social-learning formulation may be helpful in conceptualizing the reasons

for this shift, and may be of heuristic value in guiding subsequent research to trace the causal effects operative in the single-parent home. We have also shown that children reared for some time in a split home have what may be called "conflicted" yet "idealized" perceptions of their nuclear home environment. This suggests that there may be an cognitive approach-avoidance schema operative..

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FOOTNOTE: An extended version of this paper is being prepared for publication and will be available upon request from

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